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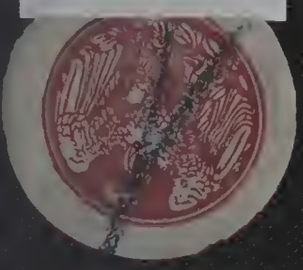

The CARRYING of the GHOST

NELSON ANTRIM CRAWFORD

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THE CARRYING OF THE GHOST

A BOOK OF VERSE

NELSON ANTRIM CRAWFORD

THE CARRYING OF THE GHOST

A BOOK OF VERSE

BY

NELSON ANTRIM CRAWFORD

BOSTON:
B. J. BRIMMER COMPANY
1923

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PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

AMBROSE PRESS, INC.
Norwood, Mass.

TO

Louise Townsend Nicholl

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

MOST of the poems in this volume have been published in various periodicals. For courteous permission to reprint them, the author expresses his acknowledgment to *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse*, *The Midland*, *The Measure*, *The Nation*, *The New Republic*, *The Smart Set*, *Contemporary Verse*, *The Pagan*, *The Wave*, and *The Chicago Tribune*; also to Dr. William Stanley Braithwaite and Messrs. Small, Maynard & Company for the privilege of reprinting *Comrades and Lovers*, *Rest Not*, which first appeared in *The Anthology of Magazine Verse for 1919*. The title poem, *The Carrying of the Ghost*, was awarded the prize of $100 in the poetry contest conducted by the Kansas Authors' Club in 1920. *Song* was awarded the Betty Earle Lyric Prize in 1923.

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THE CARRYING OF THE GHOST

A MES-QUA-KIE CEREMONY

(*The Friends and the Mourners chant responsively*)

Let the ghost of the brave be carried away.

Let the ghost of the brave be carried away.

Mourners, look up.

Fasters, look up.

You who have shed your blood, look up.

You whose tears were not enough to shed,

Look up, look up.

We cannot look up.

We cannot look up.

A moon ago died the dutiful son.

A moon ago died the faithful husband.

A moon ago died the brave, the friend.

His ghost is cold.

His ghost is naked.

Let the ghost of the brave be carried away.

Mourners, look up.

Fasters, look up.

We cannot look up.

We cannot look up.

Mourners, fasters,

Where is his ghost ?

In the Happy Hunting Ground

Pursues he the game ?

Fights he in company with ancient warriors ?

Fights he in company with Hot Hand ?

Fights he in company with Cold Hand ?

Fights he with the ancient brave Mes-qua-kies ?

Mourners, fasters,

Where is his ghost ?

Is he in the Happy Hunting Ground ?

Is he in the Happy Hunting Ground ?

Aï, aï ! Aï, aï ! Aï, aï !

Aï, aï ! Aï, aï ! Aï, aï !

Why is he not in the Happy Hunting Ground ?

Why is he not in the Happy Hunting Ground ?

Mourners, fasters,

Have you not sent him ?

Mourners and fasters,

Befriend him, befriend him.

Mourners and fasters,

Befriend his ghost.

Why is he not in the Happy Hunting Ground ?

Mourners, and fasters, why does his ghost tarry ?

Why is it thin and cold and naked ?

He is so loved

We cannot send him.

He is so loved

We cannot let him go.

Aï, aï ! Aï, aï ! Aï, aï !

He stands outside

The circle of the ghost-fire.

THE CARRYING OF THE GHOST

He stands outside
In the cold darkness.
His soul is naked,
He is cold, outside
In the cold darkness.
He fears the demons
In the cold darkness,
Lest they eat his soul
In the cold darkness.
Mourners and fasters,
Befriend his ghost.

He is son : we cannot send him.
He is brother : we cannot send him.
He is husband : we cannot send him.

He is friend : we cannot send him.

We cannot send him.

We cannot let him go.

If we send him,

He comes back no more.

If he goes,

He comes back no more.

He is lonely and friendless.

He has no companions.

He sees his friends

By the smoky ghost-fire,

But they cannot see him.

He hears their voices

Praise him by the ghost-fire,

But they cannot hear him

When he replies.

Thin is his voice :

They cannot hear it.

Send him to the Happy Hunting Ground,

Where dwell his ancestors.

Send him to the Happy Hunting Ground,

Where dwell Hot Hand and Cold Hand.

Long is the ghost-road :

No one returns by it.

Long is the ghost-road :

He comes back no more.

Long is the ghost-road : no one returns by it.

Long is the ghost-road : but all go over it.

THE CARRYING OF THE GHOST

Long is the ghost-road : you will go over it.

You will go over it, if you will send him.

Long is the ghost-road :

No one returns by it.

Long is the ghost-road :

He comes back no more.

He wanders in the cold, beyond the ghost-fire.

He picks up crumbs like a wolf in the cold.

He has no horse : he can hunt no game.

Long is the ghost-road,

But all go over it.

Long is the ghost-road.

You will go over it.

You will go over it

If you will send him.

Yes, we will send him,

For we shall follow him.

Yes, we will send him,

For we shall not lose him.

Yes, we will send him :

We shall all follow after him.

We shall all follow after him,

Wise, good, loving.

Yes, we will send him :

Make ready the horse,

The new clothes, the feast.

They will send him, they will send him,

The mourners will send him,

Make ready the horse, the new clothes, the feast.

They will send him,

They will send him,

And they will follow after.

Call the ghost carriers,

Call the ghost carriers.

Bring no more wood to the smoky ghost-fire :

The ghost goes on the long ghost-road.

Bring no more food to the smoky ghost-fire :

The ghost goes on the long ghost-road.

Let the men who sit by the smoky ghost-fire

No more praise him that he may hear.

Let the men who sit by the smoky ghost-fire

Rise up now and help to make ready,

Rise up and make ready.

Make ready,

Make ready,

Rise up and make ready :

The ghost goes on the long ghost-road.

IN THE KEY OF BLUE

A Field of Flax

I have a field of flax, blue-blooming.
The fiber is tense and tough.
From it may God make blue garments
For the clear joy of Him,
For the grave glory of Him.

Like that blue there is no other —
Sturdy, caressing, unbearably perfect,
Not hiding,
Nor revealing,
Merely being.
It is not one blue,

But three :

One quite somber,

One quite glad,

One quite full of wistfulness.

Yet they agree in one.

You, belovéd,

You are a field of flax, blue-blooming.

The fiber is tense and tough.

From it may God make blue garments

For the clear joy of Him,

For the grave glory of Him.

A Voice

It is too dark to see

The hard, white, poplar-bordered road

Or the soft warm lake beyond one poplar row.
But your voice comes from the dark, and I see
A dull-blue woven thing,
Full of the smell of blue roses
Blown across a misty salt sea.

Hands

Moulder of Visions,
I will take your two hands,
Browned, strong, tender, creative,
One of them wearing a blue-and-silver ring.
And I will make them into music —
A symphony of blue-and-silver nights
And stark red days on brown sands
And lilac-lighted sunsets,

And the hands of God the Artist,

Browned, strong, tender, creative,

One of them wearing a blue-and-silver ring —

Holding,

Shaping,

Moulding intricately

Tough, pliant clay.

IMPROVISATION

O

fragilely conceived

lady. . . .

O delicate green and wistaria stillnesses

laid lengthwise

on silver-tipped olive

ripples. . . .

Yellow light

rests quiescent, caressing,

on glazed lavender waves.

Ah ! manifold stately luster. . . .

Ah ! wind of apricot blossoms

and lifting up of fringed banners
in ultimate wistful procession.

O
fragilely conceived
lady,
lay your finger tips
softly
on God's bosom.
He will like to be reminded
of apricot blossoms.

RAINBOW DAYS

(Composition for a lute of two strings)

Rainbow days ?

Rainbow days ?

Sue,

What are rainbow days ?

Sue,

Do your eyes reflect

Rainbow days ?

Are there always —

Or nearly always —

Rainbow days to reflect ?

Always rainbow days or

Solemn stars ?

Do they ?

Are there ?

Do they ?

Are there ?

Sue,

Always,

Sue,

Or nearly always

(But sometimes solemn stars)

Rainbow days.

A. LEON SKIPWITH TAKES HIS SOUL TO CHURCH

This is a

O Boris Anisfeld

this is a meritorious

unthinkable

of unthinkables.

Parade :

Parade :

Parade.

Red plush seats

and red-carpeted aisles.

(There is a hotel in Vienna with red-carpeted corridors.

She lay on the

red plush sofa

in a blue striped gown.

O nuit de chine . . .

O Boris Anisfeld. . . .

firm legs and

steps backward

yielding on red crunching carpet.)

This is the procession

of a god-knows-what-it-is.

Heads on shoulders

face the wrong way

on the crunching carpet.

This is a somnolent meritorious

of all the meritorious.

A. LEON SKIPWITH TAKES HIS SOUL TO CHURCH

I slept
beside blue stripes
of the organ.

O understanding heart,
o light at eventide,
o all the restraining dull relics,
come down the red corridor
lie on the red plush sofa
in the aisle.
Yesterday.
Now meritorious red plush and
an answer to
Did I ask a question ?
did I ?

THE HOUSE STATIC

The house static says :

In ancient exquisite unveilings

(Speak now no uneager word)

archaic my mind

revels quiescently,

a cat slithering insipidly

among intense

disarranged Venetian potteries —

And do you like the flowered wall paper,

do you like it,

Madame Inquiline ?

TREES

The Catalpa

Pink-sprinkled summer twilight
And soft brown velvet
Of a violin.

Elms

Planted by the conventional,
Yet not conventional,
Growing in calm disregard
Of the binders of beauty and culture.
New England, you have not forgotten us,
But we have forgotten you.

The Apple Tree

Dance, *ma petite cherie,*

Isn't it spring ?

And spring doesn't last till tomorrow,

Ma petite cherie.

Pines

The slow measure of the chanted war song. . . .

The storm cloud, dull throbbing black against the sky. . . .

The lover constant though unloved.

Poplars

Statuesque cold-eyed women

In smooth, caress-inviting green silk

En promenade.

The Oak

Yes, William Morris,

Here is your heart

In a tree,

Where you would have it.

Yes, it still lives ;

Every oak is a memory of you.

Willows

Coquettes tinkle ukeleles

Fatuously,

Droopingly

The exertion tires them — poor dears !

The Ginkgo

Heavy Chinese sirup,

Lucent, cloying,

Drunk on a tiny blue table

To the tiny, lotus-scented tinkle

Of a temple bell.

The Blue Spruce

Faultlessly carven jade

Is no more faultless than you are,

Little tree.

But I love you,

Little tree,

In spite of your faultlessness.

THE MATHEMATICIAN

Stranger alike to traffic's clamor crude
And to joy's throbbing, intricate design,
He stands serene. A formula, a line,
With changeless beauty is by him endued.
Striver for truth's perfection, no light mood
May move him. Differential, axiom, sign,
Bring to him glimpses of the far divine,
Marking the boundaries of finitude.
By Euclid's theorems cramped, he seeks new spheres,
And walks in high, far ways forever free,
Toils with awed vision through the ordered years,
Till, from the all-but-handled harmony,
In some grave problem Deity appears,
And in a graph he finds Eternity.

THE SWEEPER

I swept time forth across the threshold
Of my room.
It was grey, wet, rough, and heavy
On my yellow broom.

Like sand left by the tide, I said.

The tide floods sand slowly, curvingly
Back once more.
Perhaps tomorrow time will be flooded back
Upon my floor.
I will thrust fast the bolts,
And stuff the crevices with rags,
Lest time creep in
Beneath my door.

MY FURROW

Plow a straight furrow,

Said the husbandman,

Said the schoolmaster,

Said the priest.

Had I plowed a straight furrow,

I had reached a white house,

I had sat down to eat and drink,

I had stayed long to rest me.

Yes, I think I should have died in the white cottage.

But my furrow has touched a stream bank,

With a white glistening naiad upon it.

MY FURROW

It has crossed a yellow-brown road
With wine-dark grapes by the side of it.
It has skirted the base of a mountain
More lovely than Fujiyama.
I am still plowing my furrow.
I have come to no end of it,
And maybe shall come to none ever.

In my crooked furrow,
I meet the husbandman,
I meet the schoolmaster,
I meet the priest.
Still they say,
Plow a straight furrow.

Let me never plow a straight furrow.

SONG

These are the words of the wind :

Over your white body shall pass

Whorls of water, whorls of light,

Of the luster of blown glass.

These are the words of the wind.

You are beloved of the silence

And the grey still rain.

Once the sun loved you utterly,

And shall love you again.

These are the words of the wind :

Over your white body shall pass

Whorls of water, whorls of light,

Of the luster of blown glass.

These are the words of the wind.

AROUND YOU MUSIC

Around you music flows like quiet wind,
Blowing the tendrils of your sun-loved hair,
And casting colors painters fain would find,
Upon your face so softly radiant there.
About your head, boy-beautiful, there plays
Gregorian music from a distant choir.
Then, in the midst of solemn blues and greys,
Comes in a Palestrina cloud of fire,
And now from far, a crashing Wagner note,
Muted to shadows on a lake of glass,
As Debussy speaks where the moonbeams float
In silver-cadenced rhythm — float and pass.
Builded through all past times since music's birth,
Timeless your beauty is as music's worth.

FRAGRANCE IS YOURS

Fragrance is yours, as honey is the bee's :
This is the symbol — and the literal word.
A perfumed glamor upon star-lit seas,
Where from infinity the waves have heard
Unearthly voices ; and a quiet room,
Furnished with pictures, books, and pert day-bed,
Are woven on your aromatic loom
To make a tapestry without a thread.
You have sipped light from every evening star,
You have heard odors stealing from the flute
And mingled them with gold and cinnabar,
Yet casually you say, "No absolute
Is this I've found, but just a pleasant play
To whisk away the moments of today."

LACELIKE LOVES OF CHILDHOOD

Lacelike loves of childhood,

Thin, white, unglowing,

Back they come to trouble us

Who love the fire and its burning.

They come in sharp angles

Seen through windy mists.

Lacelike loves of childhood,

Unsought, from far returning —

A copy-book and a blue ribbon,

Starched white muslin and little scared eyes —

Back they come to trouble us.

CARVER OF THE NIGHT

Cleave the night,
O most beautiful,
with the sword of your great loveliness.

Make through the carven moonlight
a way for the ivory procession.

Who is there
that can know your loveliness,
O carver of the night,
O leader of the ivory procession ?

UNFULFILLMENT

On the dark water,

The two gleams of moonlight —

How they quiver in their love !

Yet, seeking forever,

Never can they embrace.

YOU AND ME

When I hear your sharp sudden " Hello,"

I think of a box suddenly sprung open

And you popping up

In yellow hair

And bright green smock

To greet me —

Me a child with ecstatic fists

And you a doll-in-the box.

COMPANIONSHIP

In the intertwirling smoke of our cigarettes

Is a caressing sense of intricate congruity.

There is sea-blue in this quiet place,

And infinite crisp echoes of music,

Bound together with cords of uttermost fragility.

SURFEIT

I am saturated with you,

like a sponge

plunged in attar of damask roses.

LAKE

You are a broad white lake,

Silent.

On your surface people launch their sun-warmed souls.

Reflected in you, they see themselves

Tall, profound, mystical.

IMPOTENCE

While you lived,

I could make you neither glad nor unhappy.

Now you are dead,

I can neither lull nor awaken you.

Always I am impotent.

PORTRAIT OF A WOMAN

Golden light singing

Quivers on white sandalwood.

Flutelike fragrance

Unknowable

Ascends spirally

With uprising, downfalling music

Of bells

In caverns.

DISSEVERANCE

I took a piece of life between my thumb and finger,

Thinking to break it in two brittlely,

Like a dry, snapping twig,

But it tore jaggedly, wretchedly,

Like a soggy proof just pulled from the press.

BRANCHES

Pierre Gris,

When an old man,

Saw winter branches brown, grey, dulled silver.

These, he said, are the no longer green

Hopes of my youth.

They seem to interlace,

But I remember that that is

Illusion.

TO A CEDAR ON A WINDY HILL

O tall New Englander,

why the ungirt garment

of Japan ?

CREED

Not leaves burned shapeless, not leaves sere lying,

But the green, green bough :

Not love forgotten, nor love remembered,

But love now.

CRITICISM

The picture has four notes,

to be sounded

on timbrel,

rebec,

tabret,

lute.

But no one sounded them

when the picture and I were alive.

Now I have forgotten

what they are.

GLORIES

Through the half open door,

Over the grey sidewalk,

In front of the many-domed Russian Cathedral —

Alien of aliens, here in the Occident —

Sweeps music,

Bitter, plaintive,

Yearning, turbulent,

Splashing purple, red, blue, gold,

Over the grey sidewalk :

Varicolored glory of the East

On the grey glory of the West.

Through the half open door,

Over the grey sidewalk,

Drifts incense smoke,

Curling in lavender spirals,

Now soft, now heavy,

Scented with a far, foreign odor,

Mingled with hesitating lilac fragrance

From the bush on the green parking :

Mystic glory of the East

With the simple glory of the West.

Through the door, opened wide,

On to the grey sidewalk,

Pour the worshippers —

Aliens of aliens, here in the Occident —

With far-looking eyes,

With far-seeking faces,

With far-born turbulent tongues,

Jostling the kindly, contented, practical,

Conventional-voiced passers-by :

Tomorrow's glory of the East,

Jostling today's glory of the West.

NOCTURNE FANTASTIQUE

Such grotesquerie were unpermitted
  Save in vermillion cities of my dreams—
Quavering witch voices misting querulously
  Down desolate valleys of dry streams.

I will arise and shout myself a warning
  Never to walk in sea-covered cities again. . . .
Yet no, I will not, for a sure voice calls me
  In the sound of reapers reaping long-dead grain.

There is obedience in the wet sand between my fingers
  And even in the waves recalcitrant. . . .
Shall wind flowers bloom in the sea-covered cities,
  While dreams change stodgily to adamant?

ON THE GREAT PLAINS

Green and white mountains,

Hard grey sand,

And the gravely passionate sea —

These have forgotten me.

In the light of the petulant sun

The great iron roller of the wheat field

Crushes my soul,

Makes it a dirty, red-brown powder —

A stifling mulch

Against hot joy,

Against sweating grief.

TUMBLEWEEDS

In the wind

The tumbleweeds are

Corpulent village mayors,

Welcoming distinguished guests

On the railway station platform.

IN THE SHOE-SHINE PARLOR

The Greek lad

In the shoe-shine parlor,

Has a liturgy of shoe-shining :

So many taps of the hand on the leather,

So many snaps of the polishing cloth,

So many crackles with a bit of tin in his hand,

And under his breath intoned foreign words.

The words ? Those of the server at the Divine Liturgy

In the Church of St. James in Nauplia,

Repeated in the shoe-shine parlor.

IN VERMONT

I believe the phoenix will die
Mysteriously, and rise again
On the shore of Memphremagog.

The gnarled old grower of apples told me so,
Who has lived in north Vermont
Since no one there can remember.
(I think he and the phoenix
Rose from the same grey ashes,
And soon they both will be ashes again.
I should like to see them rise once more,
Especially my grower of apples.)

DÉCOUVERTE

For seven years — or maybe eight —
I knew your searching face
And the way a pale green smock
Hung in undulance, sea-suggesting,
About your firm, uncorseted hips.
Also I knew your hard blue paintings
With their yellow lantern suns
And cold melodious figures.

But you I did not know
Till at a table,
Black-and-gold enameled,
In a little café
You lighted a cigarette

And said to me quietly,

" My friend,

I wish that God would let me be

A thin grey wisp of smoke."

HYACINTHS

China-blue hyacinths,

You are back again.

Straight and almost stately,

Colored from dulled spring sky,

You are as honest as God, my china-blue flowers.

Your sisters the orchids are exotically subtle,

And your sisters the roses are worldly wise.

Primroses, poets say truly, are modest —

But how I hate shy unctuous modesty !

Daisies I love, and daffodils,

And the quiet soft soothing of deep blue squills.

But if I were to be a flower —

Which God knows I could not be —

I should choose, I think, to be you,

O hyacinths china-blue.

MUSIC

I

I do not applaud music :

I applaud my own thoughts,

Listening to music.

II

Were your spirit music,

Could I play the sonata ?

Or, after all, would it be a sonata

Or merely an ariette ?

HUMORESQUE

When Arthur's slender lavender wife died in bearing a
child,
He wept decorously,
Bore himself punctiliously in the ritual of the requiem,
Gave the courteous young priest a gold coin,
Then went home
And composed, with the aid of a riming dictionary,
A Ballade of Sorrow
And a rondel about death
In the manner of Henley.

THE PHOTOGRAPH

(A page from the diary of Eloise Grayson, afterward Mrs. Frank Leicester)

I have given you my photograph, though I despise you.
You asked for it plausibly, with a certain proper humility,
And so I could give it to you
With no loss of self-respect.

I know that you will put it in your room, miscalled by you your study,
With the other photographs that you have,
And that you will talk ribaldly about it, —
About arms and legs and subjects that I cannot modestly think of.

Frank will drop into your room,

And my photograph —

Cartier did a stunning piece of work on it —

Will be all that he will see.

Nothing you can say will count.

He will ever after associate me with that photograph,

Which is not myself.

And by and by he will have me,

Who am not my photograph.

And you still will have my photograph,

Which is not myself.

We shall all be quite satisfied —

Except, perhaps, Frank. I wonder. . . .

THE AFTERNOON PARTY

Limp, pale-green questions ;

Flounced, lace-trimmed, succory-tinted asseverations ;

Scarlet exclamations, turning magenta ;

Lavender and maize-yellow compliments,

Perfumed by violet-scented cigarettes.

ERROR

O plum-blossom lady,

the cherries

cast their bloom on your shoulders.

Can it be

that neither they nor God

realizes the ineptitude ?

COMRADES AND LOVERS, REST NOT

For Walt Whitman, 1919

Oh, you genteel, conventional, uncourageous,

Bank presidents, suave, and your anaemic women,

Professional Y. M. C. A. secretaries and directors of boards of welfare,

Holders of doctorates from Leipzig and your conservative, purposeless students,

Village newspaper men, telling as your own what your party central committees have told you,

Reactionary government officials, pretending to be efficient in the public service,

Blustering Western politicians, ignorant of history, blunderers in logic, opponents of free speech, of even-handed justice, of world service by the nation,

Impassive ridiculous women, facing neither truth nor emotion, taking refuge in ponderous, superstitious platitudes,

All you "never-enders," who regretted the early close of the war and sneered at the cheering over the armistice,

You who tried to cover up the wartime views of Lowell when you unctuously celebrated his centenary,

And you who paid sixty dollars for a set of Walt Whitman's works and have not opened it except to paste in your bookplate with its fatuous Latin motto —

All you conventional illiberals, evaders of fact and decision, distrustful of others, distrustful of yourselves,

You will praise Walt Whitman this month because it is fashionable to observe his centenary.

It is well : you are better satisfied that you do not know him.

For do you think Walt Whitman the egotist, the unconventional, the liberal, the sincere, the frank, the healthy, the free, the light-hearted, the heroic,

The glad, the rough, the tender, the democrat, the American, the world-citizen, the friend of the worker,

Poet of the body, poet of the soul, poet of every dauntless rebel,

Would want to associate with you, or do you think you would want to associate with him ?

What do you care for America, real America, for democracy, and for the name of America and the name of democracy

In England, France, Jugo-Slavia, Russia, Mexico, Argentina, Poland, Brazil, Czecho-Slovakia, Belgium, the Ukraine, Japan, Liberia, China, Italy, New Zealand?
You would have America secede from the world — self-cultured, sufficient,
You would make her an old maid, hopeless, childless, pitied and despised.
You would destroy democracy by establishing an espionage, a censorship of life and art and opinion.
And this month you will yawp the praises of Whitman,
You who have met Whitman on Broadway, in Camden, in Lawrence, in the mines of Arizona, and on the prairies of North Dakota.
Yes, you have met him and have not recognized him;
You have met him and hated and scorned him.

Afoot and light-hearted, Walt Whitman still is traveling
the open road,
And the long brown path is still before him.
He sat by the bedsides of dying boys in the hospitals of
Europe.
He strode past the White House in Washington as another
President looked out and exclaimed, " Well, *he* looks
like a *man* ! "
He marched with the Russian hosts that overthrew the
Czar in that silent revolution,
He sat in the assembly room with the striking telephone
operators of Massachusetts,
He paces the quays and the streets of Paris the brother
and friend of all men,
He longs with anxious longing for realization of his vision :

The Asiatic and the African hand in hand — the European and American hand in hand.

And you, carpenters, farmers, deckhands, weavers, printers, bridge builders, pickers of cotton in the South and harvesters of wheat in the North,

Sheep herders, brakemen, brick masons, telephone operators, shop girls, wheel tappers, waiters, hired girls, workers in mines, mail carriers, whitewings, laborers skilled and unskilled,

Yes, and you lawyers, doctors, writers, engineers, manufacturers, shop-keepers,

All of you who are fair and honest and seekers after justice for all men,

Walt Whitman will return to lead you on the open road of honesty, frankness, democracy.

(Most of you never owned a volume of Walt Whitman,
but he is your companion and you are his companions,
beloved, inseparable.)

You are his great companions, you are his swift and majestic men, you are his greatest women.

You and he will travel together the long brown path, the grand road of the universe,

Seeking only perfect democracy, seeking only the glory of America as she serves the universe.

Comrades and lovers,

Comrades and lovers,

Comrades and lovers,

Rest not.

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